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Plane Engineer Accused as Spy

Employing a little stealth of their own, Federal agents in California last week arrested an aircraft engineer who, they said, had handed over preliminary plans for making United States bombers invisible to radar.

Three times this month, according to Government accounts, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents posing as Soviet contacts met Thomas Patrick Cavanagh, an employee of Northrop Corporation. Mr. Cavanagh has worked for Northrop's Advanced Systems Division since November 1981, a month after the company was awarded a contract for initial research and development of

the Stealth bomber.

Mr. Cavanagh was described as eager to peddle an initial batch of secrets so he could pay off debts. Then, the authorities said, he hoped to obtain a stalled top-secret security clearance, the better to obtain even more valuable Stealth data. "I'm after big money," Mr. Cavanagh was quoted as having told undercover agents in a tape-recorded meeting Dec. 12; "\$25,000 is a drop in the bucket, believe me."

Their last meeting took place on Tuesday, in a suburb of Los Angeles, when Mr. Cavanagh was taken into custody. He was charged with the unauthorized removal of classified technical manuals, blueprints, drawings and a list of subcontractors. In a television interview, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger said the arrest "demonstrates again the Soviets' unremitting efforts to ac-

quire" Stealth technology "not by developing it themselves but by stealing it from other countries."

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